

Shakesperience

PRODUCTIONS, INC.

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Good Evening Senator Duff, Representative Backer, and honorable members of the subcommittee. I am Jeffrey Lapham, Executive Director of Shakesperience Productions, Inc. As the only non-performer of a theatre company, I will be brief. Shakesperience is a statewide touring theatre for education headquartered in Waterbury, Connecticut. We average 8 full-time staff members in any given month who pay Connecticut income taxes. Our 650 annual programs serve 70,000 students in 70 communities in our state.

I would like to speak to the current funding and structure of the Commission on Culture & Tourism, which I encourage you to support. The Commission indirectly supports Shakesperience and other artists and arts agencies when it provides matching funds for schools and parent organizations to present arts and culture to students when school budgets cannot. Additionally, direct operating support from this agency is responsible for about 6% of Shakesperience's annual budget. Although this amount of income appears to be small, it is vitally important to us for what it represents. Like many arts agencies in our state, Operating Support and Endowment Fund Grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism represent the only administrative support that we receive. All other funding goes directly to producing our art and education programs. Obviously, we cannot deliver these programs to Connecticut schools and residents, attract visitors, bring theatergoers to restaurants, and otherwise lend to the art and culture of the Waterbury region and the state without some funding to administrate them. As this economy worsens, arts agencies are collapsing throughout the state and across the country with resulting job losses. I fear that without your support of the Commission, the anticipated loss of the funding they administer will endanger Shakesperience and dozens of other agencies and the jobs and collateral spending they provide.

During the current budget season please keep in mind the jobs and economic impact created by the arts. Shakesperience and its employees, students, audience, arts council, and partner organizations need the Commission on Culture & Tourism. They carefully administrate targeted programs to successfully enrich the culture and education, and in the process, payroll tax revenues of our state. If the DECD is inspired to incorporate the arts and culture into economic, housing, and community development, I would call that unusually enlightened forward thinking. However, its much more likely that there will be a lot fewer arts and cultural building blocks for this imagined development without an effective and supported Commission on Culture & Tourism.

Thank you for your attention and your hard work to represent your constituents.

Shakesperience Productions, Inc.

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